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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3953rd meeting of the Security Council, held on 11 December 1998 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council recalls the statement of its President of 31 August 1998 (S/PRST/1998/26) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It remains deeply concerned about the continuing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which threatens peace, security and stability in the region, and about its grave humanitarian consequences.

"The Security Council reaffirms the obligation to respect the territorial integrity, political independence and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other States in the region, including the obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations. It also reaffirms the need for all States to refrain from any interference in each other's internal affairs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

"The Security Council, in this context, calls for a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including an immediate ceasefire, the orderly withdrawal of all foreign forces, arrangements for security along the international borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the whole territory of the country, and the initiation of an all-inclusive national reconciliation process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo which fully respects the equality and rights of all, irrespective of ethnic origin, and of a political process which leads to the early holding of democratic, free and fair elections.

"The Security Council expresses its support for the regional mediation process begun by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and of the Southern African Development Community, and currently led by the President

of Zambia, takes note of the steps, including the establishment of the ad hoc liaison committee, that have been taken towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict and encourages the President of Zambia to continue his efforts.

"The Security Council welcomes in particular the initiative taken by the Secretary-General at the Twentieth Conference of Heads of State of Africa and France, held in Paris from 26 to 28 November 1998, to bring about an end to the conflict and reach an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. The Council welcomes the public commitments made in Paris in this regard by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda and the Presidents and heads of delegation of Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Chad. It strongly urges them to give effect to these commitments. To that end, the Council calls on all the parties concerned to participate at the highest level possible in the upcoming summit to be held in Lusaka on 14 and 15 December 1998, and urges them to work in a constructive and flexible spirit with a view to the signing of a ceasefire agreement as a matter of urgency. The Council also encourages participants at the meeting of the central organ of the OAU, in Ouagadougou on 17 and 18 December 1998, to use this opportunity to take urgent steps towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

"The Security Council is prepared to consider, in the light of efforts towards peaceful resolution of the conflict, the active involvement of the United Nations, in coordination with OAU, including through concrete, sustainable and effective measures, to assist in the implementation of an effective ceasefire agreement and in an agreed process for a political settlement of the conflict.

"The Security Council condemns any violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including acts of and incitement to ethnic hatred and violence by all parties. It urges all parties to respect and protect human rights and respect humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, as applicable to them, and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948.

"The Security Council notes with particular concern that the worsening of tension is resulting in a deterioration of the food situation for the civilian population and an increase in the flow of refugees and displaced persons. In this context, the Council reiterates its call for safe and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to all those in need in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and once again urges all parties to guarantee the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

"The Security Council also reaffirms the importance of holding, at the appropriate time, an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and OAU.

"The Security Council strongly encourages the Secretary-General to continue to work actively with the Secretary-General of OAU and with all the parties concerned to help find a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. It requests him to keep it informed about efforts to achieve a peaceful solution and to make recommendations on a possible role of the United Nations to this end.

"The Security Council will remain actively seized of the matter."

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